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**TO: Economic Support Supervisors
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W-2 Agencies
Workforce Development Boards
Job Center Leads and Managers**

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BEM/DWS OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 05-34 Amended (9/12/05)

DATE: 9/9/05

FS	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	SC	<input type="checkbox"/>
CTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	CC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FSET	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	CF	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>
WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other EP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

PRIORITY: HIGH

SUBJECT: Providing Services to Hurricane Katrina Evacuees

CROSS REFERENCE: Operations Memo 05-34

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 29, 2005

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding the various forms of assistance and support available to families that have relocated to Wisconsin due to Hurricane Katrina.

BACKGROUND

It has been over a week since Hurricane Katrina swept through New Orleans, other portions of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. In light of the extensive damage that occurred and the undetermined amount of time that it will take to clean-up these areas, Wisconsin has begun to see the arrival of Hurricane Katrina evacuees, both in an organized effort by the American Red Cross as well as families that have chosen to relocate themselves (self-evacuees).

The following chart identifies those areas affected by Hurricane Katrina:

State	Area
Alabama	Baldwin, Clarke, Choctaw, Mobile, Sumter, and Washington Counties
Louisiana	The parishes of Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Calcasieu, Cameron, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Pointe Coupee, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermilion, Washington, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana
Mississippi	Adams, Amite, Attala, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Claiborne, Clarke, Clay, Copiah, Covington, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Hinds, Itawamba, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Kemper, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Lee, Lincoln, Lowndes, Madison, Marion, Monroe, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Stone, Walthall, Warren, Wayne, Webster, Wilkinson, and Winston Counties.

The economic and employment needs of these families will be significant. Below, is policy guidance on those programs managed by the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) that may be essential in assisting the evacuees.

POLICY GUIDANCE

WISCONSIN WORKS (W-2)

Not all hurricane evacuees will need or necessarily want W-2. However, if evacuees do apply for W-2, all W-2 program policies apply. Below we have provided guidance on specific policies that may be of concern to W-2 agencies.

Nonfinancial Eligibility

Policy: *Individuals must be a resident of Wisconsin and unless the applicant is a migrant worker, demonstrate an intent to continue living in the state. To be eligible, the applicant is not required to have resided in Wisconsin for any specified length of time.*

Because of the extent of damage and destruction in the areas hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina, agencies must assume that the evacuees intend to continue living in the state for an undetermined period of time, thus meeting this eligibility requirement.

Policy: *W-2 applicants and participants cannot receive SSI/SSDI.*

Evacuees that are recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) are not eligible for W-2. However, if these individuals who are receiving SSI or some type of Social Security disability benefits need help obtaining their benefits, they must be referred to the nearest Social Security Administration office for assistance. To locate the address of the nearest Social Security Administration office, call 1-800-772-1213 or go to the Social Security Office Locator on the Internet at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/locator/>. Because of the trauma experienced by the evacuees of Hurricane Katrina and despite the fact that these individuals are not eligible for W-2, agency

staff must do everything in their power to assist these individuals in getting the information necessary to continue receiving their SSI/SSDI benefits.

Policy: *Individuals must provide all requested documentation within seven working days after receiving the request for information from the W-2 agency (verification).*

The W-2 agency must verify nonfinancial information to determine whether an applicant/participant qualifies for W-2. Acceptable verification includes a written or oral statement from a third party supporting the individual's statement. The W-2 agency must assist the evacuees in obtaining needed documents to expedite the verification process. If the individual has made a reasonable effort and cannot obtain required verification, the application must not be denied based on the verification that could not be obtained. The agency must use available information to process the case. In the event the individual cannot obtain the appropriate verification, a signed statement included in the file from the applicant will meet the verification requirement.

Although the W-2 verification policy allows for an extension of the verification due date if extenuating circumstances exist that make the verification requirements unduly burdensome, agencies **MUST NOT** delay eligibility for the hurricane evacuees. Agencies must proceed as directed above by using a signed statement from the applicant as verification.

CARES Instructions: Enter verification code **AF** for all information that is verified by a signed statement from the applicant. In addition, add a note in CMCC that verification was obtained from the applicant's signed statement.

NOTE ➤ It is expected that some evacuees may not know their Social Security Numbers (SSN) and they will not have verification with them. This should not delay CARES processing as SSN is not a required field in CARES and the case will not be denied if the SSN is not entered. However, the applicant must cooperate in providing an SSN, which means that the evacuee should be put in contact with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to determine how this information can be obtained. In the meantime, this information should be left blank in CARES.

Policy: *Individuals who have received 60 months or more of TANF assistance are not eligible for W-2.*

There are two implications with the time limit policy. First, the verification of TANF received in another state. Refer to the W-2 Manual, Section 2.3.6 for policies and procedures on verifying receipt of TANF assistance in another state. In the event that the applicant does not have contact information for the other state, use the links below in order to identify the appropriate TANF offices in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Louisiana: http://www.dss.state.la.us/departments/ofs/OFS_Parish_Offices.html

Alabama: [http://www.dhr.state.al.us/contacts.asp?div=Family%20\(Financial\)%20Assistance%20Program](http://www.dhr.state.al.us/contacts.asp?div=Family%20(Financial)%20Assistance%20Program)

Mississippi: <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/eadirectory1.htm>

As stated in the W-2 Manual, 2.3.6.2, if the contact cannot confirm whether cash assistance received in the other state counts as TANF assistance, do not use the information. Also, due to the severity of the damage in these states, if contact cannot be made at all, proceed with the best information available.

Second, implications with regard to time limit policy have to do with eligibility for extensions. If an individual who has received more than 60 months of TANF assistance in another state applies for W-2, that individual may be eligible for an extension. The FEP has to determine extension eligibility based on the extension criteria. When applying the extension criteria, the FEP would use information obtained during the W-2 informal assessment. In addition, the FEP must attempt to contact the other state for more specific information about the applicant. If the FEP is unable to obtain additional information, the information gathered through the informal assessment must be used to determine extension eligibility.

With regard to the hurricane evacuees, it is assumed that many of these individuals have significant barriers to employment, which is one of the extension criterion. Due to the undetermined length of stay in Wisconsin for these evacuees, agencies should consider granting extensions for up to three months at a time. At the end of the three-month extension, the victim's eligibility for a subsequent extension should be assessed. Refer to Operations Memo 04-20 for additional information.

Policy: *Applicants and participants who meet all financial and nonfinancial requirements may be eligible for a W-2 employment position even if the dependent child(ren) is temporarily absent from the home.*

All existing conditions for temporary absence must be met, even by Katrina evacuees. However, with regard to the custodial parent continuing to exercise responsibility for the care and control of the child, it is assumed that the evacuee retains this responsibility even though the child(ren) may not currently be with the parent.

Informal Assessments

During the W-2 informal assessment process, if it is determined that a family has relocated to Wisconsin due to Hurricane Katrina, the W-2 agency must ensure that these individuals have registered with the American Red Cross. Attached is a link to a list of the Wisconsin Chapters of the American Red Cross. <http://www.redcross.org/where/chapts.asp#WI>. Registration consists of filling out an American Red Cross Shelter Registration Form, which will be filed with the local chapter. By registering with the American Red Cross, evacuees of Hurricane Katrina will have access to many services to assist in their relocation efforts, e.g., obtaining temporary identification cards, finding housing, accessing specialized case managers, assistance in locating missing family members, etc. W-2 agencies must have evacuees follow through on the American Red Cross registration process.

In addition, hurricane evacuees who have come to Wisconsin on their own are encouraged to contact FEMA and apply for federal disaster assistance. They may be eligible for a variety of grants and programs. To register, contact FEMA at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or for the hearing/speech impaired at TTY: 1-800-462-7585. The current hours and days of operation are 24 hours per day seven days a week. Registration is also available online on the FEMA website at www.FEMA.gov.

Attached is a link to a brochure published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It describes a federal program that provides money and services to people in disaster areas when losses are not covered by insurance and property has been damaged and destroyed. The brochure *Help After a Disaster: Applicant's Guide to the Individuals and Households Program (IHP)(August 2005)* provides information that will help evacuees understand the IHP program, explains how to apply and outlines the eligibility conditions needed to qualify. http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/process/help_after_disaster_english.pdf

W-2 Placements

Based on a thorough informal assessment and inventory of each applicant's needs, the Financial and Employment Planner (FEP) must place applicants in the most appropriate W-2 employment position. Early efforts by the W-2 agency must focus on ensuring that basic needs are met, e.g., food, housing, clothing, medical needs, transportation, child care, etc. In addition, it is unlikely that any of these evacuees will be prepared to immediately engage in work experience activities. Therefore, the most likely placement would be W-2 Transitions (W-2T) until the evacuees' situations have stabilized, however, placement should be determined on a case by case basis, since some evacuees may be anxious to return to employment.

CONNECTING EVACUEES TO EMPLOYMENT

Once Hurricane Katrina evacuees' family situations have stabilized, W-2 agencies should make the same effort at connecting relocated evacuees of Hurricane Katrina with employment as they do for existing W-2 applicants and participants by using existing Job Center resources. Agencies should provide appropriate employment search and work experience opportunities to these individuals. The Division of Workforce Solutions will be issuing a memo to other Workforce Development Programs providing information on the role these programs can play in assisting Hurricane Katrina evacuees obtain employment.

In addition, a new employment-related resource will be announced later this week by the Department of Labor. A new job board is being developed that will focus on supporting the transition back into employment for individuals impacted by Katrina. The goal of the site will be to connect job seekers with employers in high-growth, high-demand industries, either for the cleanup process or for permanent employment. The site is designed to connect individuals in both the impacted areas and in states that are hosting evacuees.

The Katrina Recovery Job Connection at www.jobsearch.org/katrinajobs is a live site where employers may post jobs and search resumes and where job seekers can search for jobs and post resumes.

The three target functions of this site include:

Jobseekers/General Job Search: If individuals are impacted by Hurricane Katrina and either in their home state, or in a new state looking for work, this site will help them find a job.

Jobseekers/Recovery Jobs: The site also provides a place to look for temporary jobs supporting the full spectrum of employment related to the economic recovery of the region. This includes jobs related to the re-establishment of infrastructure and community services as well as jobs related to the clean-up of communities.

Employers: Employers who want to list jobs that are supporting hurricane recovery efforts OR want to hire workers impacted by the hurricane can do so on this site.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR IDENTIFYING HURRICANE KATRINA EVACUEES IN CARES

New CARES codes have been created to use when processing applications for Hurricane Katrina evacuees. Use of these codes will allow the State to identify evacuee cases.

Client Registration: New codes for “contact method” on CRIN (mainframe) or the Additional Data page (CWW) have been added to table TCTM. Use these codes when entering client registration information for a Hurricane Katrina evacuee. The codes are:

- 1 Katrina - Mail
- 2 Katrina - Phone
- 3 Katrina - Walk-in

W-2 Agency staff should use code 3.

Application Entry: Three new alert flag codes (KA, KL, KM) have been added to table TRFL for entry on ANDA (mainframe) and the Permanent Demographics page (CWW).

KA - Katrina Evacuee from Alabama
KL - Katrina Evacuee from Louisiana
KM - Katrina Evacuee from Mississippi

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (EA)

Individuals coming to Wisconsin from any area affected by Hurricane Katrina may be eligible for Emergency Assistance based on the fact that they have experienced a *natural disaster*. If the family intends to reside in Wisconsin and meets all other eligibility criteria, they may be eligible for EA based on experiencing a natural disaster.

If there is uncertainty over the intent to continue living in Wisconsin, the agency should assume that the family will stay. (See information under **Wisconsin Works (W-2)** above regarding residency).

With regard to verification, the agency must make an attempt to verify the natural disaster. In the case of Katrina, the agency may just need to verify that the town or city in which the individual came from was in fact located in the path or close to the path of the hurricane. Agencies must use the list provided in the Background section of this Operations Memo.

Because the emergency is due to a natural disaster, EA funds can be used for *temporary* housing. If housing is not an issue for the evacuees, the EA funds can be used for food, transportation, etc.

Also, because the request for EA is not solely based on homeless or impending homelessness, the family must not be denied EA for "doubling up."

Refer to the W-2 Manual, Chapter 17 for more information on Emergency Assistance policy.

EATS Instructions: On the New Grant page in the comment box, add a comment to indicate that the grant is for a Hurricane Katrina evacuee. The worker must select the Natural Disaster type and then add one of the following comments. The worker must use the exact wording indicated in quotations below:

- For Alabama evacuees, enter “Katrina Evacuee AL”
- For Louisiana evacuees, enter “Katrina Evacuee LA”
- For Mississippi evacuees, enter “Katrina Evacuee MS”

FOODSHARE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (FSET)

All Hurricane Katrina FoodShare recipients are exempt from FSET requirements for four (4) months from the application date. Food and Nutrition Service is currently working on further clarification, which will be forwarded to you as the Department receives it.

CARES Instructions: On AIWP, enter Special Circumstance code NR (No Requirements for FS) when overriding the FSET participation status from Mandatory (M) to Exempt (E).

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

The policy identified in this operations memo regarding verification of nonfinancial information for W-2 is the same for Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy program. To reiterate, agencies must not delay eligibility for Wisconsin Shares for hurricane evacuees. Agencies must proceed in determining eligibility when verification cannot be obtained by using a signed statement from the applicant as verification. The code **AF** should be entered in the verification fields in CARES/CWW where the signed statement is used as verification. This is consistent with W-2, FoodShare, and Medical Assistance.

As required in current policy, parents must be in approved activities in order to be eligible for Wisconsin Shares. Approved activities include: unsubsidized employment, W-2 approved activities including upfront job search prior to eligibility being determined, FoodShare Employment and Training activities, teens participating in the Learnfare program, individuals under the age of 20 years attending high school, and all individuals in education along with unsubsidized employment.

We expect that most hurricane evacuees will apply for W-2 benefits. The FEP will place the evacuee in the most appropriate W-2 employment position. Since most efforts by the W-2 agency will focus on ensuring basic needs are met, their approved activity will most likely be securing food, housing clothing, medical needs, transportation, etc. These activities will be their approved activity for Wisconsin Shares under W-2. The initial authorization should not exceed three months for these types of activities. The FEP will determine if additional child care is still needed and should be authorized for this activity. The FEP will determine the hours to authorize on a case by case basis being responsive to the needs of the family.

There may be a few families who do not apply for W-2 benefits but do request Wisconsin Shares. Under the current policy, these families may not meet criteria of an approved activity.

The statutes indicate individuals must satisfy other eligibility criteria established by the department in rule. The department is using this statutory authority to allow for greater flexibility in the definition of approved activity for hurricane evacuees only.

The current definition of approved activity is expanded for the hurricane evacuees who do not apply for W-2 benefits and request Wisconsin Shares. Parents involved in any activity that would enable them to make basic living arrangements, apply for federal disaster benefits and other programs, seek medical attention, etc., will be considered to be in an approved activity. The initial authorization should not exceed three months for this activity. The child care worker will determine if child care is still needed for this activity. The worker will determine the hours to authorize on a case by case basis being responsive to the needs of the family. Use the activity code "Other" on the Approved Activity page in CARES/CWW for this activity type.

CHILD SUPPORT

In anticipation of Katrina evacuees needing assistance with Child Support issues, the following telephone numbers should be distributed to the evacuees for Child Support assistance:

Milwaukee metropolitan area: (414) 615-2400
Wisconsin other than Milwaukee metro (Toll Free): (800) 991-5530

NOTE ➤ The 800 number will not work in the Milwaukee Metropolitan area.

These numbers are for the Customer Service center at the Centralized Receipting and Disbursing unit, the Wisconsin Support Collections Trust Fund. The Customer Service Representatives have been instructed as to how to handle calls from Katrina evacuees. They may handle the call themselves, refer the caller to a county child support agency, or to the Bureau of Child Support, depending on what the caller needs.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI)

Many of the evacuees coming from areas affected by Hurricane Katrina may have been unemployed as a result of Katrina. If this is the case, these individuals must be referred to the Unemployment Insurance Division for consideration of interstate Unemployment Insurance (UI) and federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) claims as needed.

In addition, the Department has set up a phone number to provide UI assistance for Katrina evacuees. The number is (414) 438-2099 or toll free (866) 463-1128. These lines have been set up to provide answers to UI-related questions and take UI claims for individuals who are currently living in Wisconsin and were unemployed as a result of Katrina.

MISCELLANEOUS

NATIVE AMERICAN EVACUEES

Spotted Eagle, Inc. is one of the Workforce Investment Act Section 166 (Native American National Program) grantees. On behalf of the Wisconsin Section 166 programs, the Native American National Programs across the state have formed a network to assist in providing employment, training and relocation assistance geared towards Native American evacuees that may arrive in Wisconsin. They may contact Spotted Eagle, Inc. at (414) 342-0700 for more information and/or a referral to the local 166 agency.

CONTACTS

BHCE CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center

Program Categories – FS – FoodShare, MA – Medicaid, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – Food Stamp Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC – Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, Other EP – Other Employment Programs.
DWD/DWS/BW-2/MMM